

I. THE CHURCH AT SARDIS

- A. The church was probably established about 40 years earlier during the great revival that spread through all of Asia from Ephesus (Acts 19-20). They were deeply touched during this revival and became a well-known church. However, over time, they became spiritually dead.
- Paul...reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord... (Acts 19:9-10)*
- Take heed to yourselves...²⁹ I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you...³⁰ From among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.³¹ Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. (Acts 20:28-31)*
- B. The Church at Sardis did not have external problems like persecution nor did they have internal problems like false teachers. Their problems were self-imposed: they failed to remember the past. They forgot how God had touched their hearts in the past and how they had responded with devotion.
- C. Sardis was a wealthy city (was the first to mint gold and silver coins) that boasted of being impenetrable because of its strategic location. Sitting on top of the rock with only one road into the city, they were very suited for military defense. Twice in their history, the city had been taken.

II. JESUS' REVELATION OF HIMSELF

These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars... (Rev. 3:1)

- A. Jesus has the seven (or seven-fold) Spirits of God – to release the diverse ministries of the Spirit to them
- The Spirit of the Lord shall rest on Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. (Isa. 11:2; cf. Zech. 4:2, 10)*
- B. Jesus has the seven Stars – Jesus will hold His people in His hands to make them bright like a star. To hold the seven stars means for Him to be deeply involved in the life and heart of the leadership of the church.
- The seven stars are the angels (messengers) of the seven churches... (Rev. 1:20)*

III. AFFIRMATION FOR FAITHFULNESS: NONE

IV. CORRECTION FOR COMPROMISE

I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead... ² I have not found your works perfect before God. (Rev. 3:1-2)

- A. They had a reputation of being spiritually alive because of their history of commitment following the great Asian revival. They were born again but lacked a sense of the Holy Spirit's presence and inspiration in their daily life.
- B. I have not found your works perfect before God – their obedience was not mature or complete. We are called to be perfect (Mt. 5:48). This is a call to seek to walk in “all” we know to be in God's will in each season of our life or in all the light the Spirit has given us in each season.

*Therefore you shall **be perfect**, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Mt. 5:48)*

V. EXHORTATION TO RESPOND (WITH A WARNING)

*Be **watchful**, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die...³ **Remember** therefore how you have received and heard; **hold fast** and **repent**. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a **thief**, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. (Rev. 3:2-3)*

- A. To be watchful (lit. “show yourself to be watchful.” Prove that they are vigilant) means to cultivate a lifestyle of prayer, fasting and obedience or to sustain a lifestyle of encountering Jesus. They needed to “wake up” spiritually, to be ready for Christ's return. This is the primary exhortation Jesus gives the Church in preparing us in the End-Times (Mt. 24:42-43; 25:13; Mk. 13:33-38; Lk 21:36-38; Rev. 3:3; 16:15). Paul's also exhorted the Church to “watch” (Acts 20:31; 1 Cor. 16:13; 1 Thes. 5:2-4, 6).

*³³ **Watch and pray**; for you do not know when the time is....³⁵ **Watch therefore**, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming...³⁷ I say to all: **Watch!** (Mk. 13:33-37)*

- B. They were to strengthen what was still remaining, remember how they had received when Jesus first touched their hearts in the revival, to hold fast and persevere, and to repent.
 - 1. Remember (and keep) and repent. This is similar to the solution for Ephesus. Since both had a lack of love and inadequate works, it is natural that both should be told the same thing. It is not just bringing these realities to mind but putting them into practice in their lives.

- C. There are 3 areas that we need to be vigilant in being watchful:

Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak (Matt. 26:41)

- 1. **Watch you life.** It's easy to “take it easy” spiritually for a little bit. The flesh has amazing capacity to not pursue God. Pursue a life of love, holiness, and peace.
- 2. **Watch your doctrine.** Your life and doctrine are very closely tied together. How you live flows out of your doctrine. (1 Tim. 4:16; 2 Tim 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1). Sound doctrine will lead you to whole-hearted love for God and His Word. Wrong doctrine will lead to passivity, distorted understanding of grace, pride, etc. e.g. some things are not worth arguing about (1 Tim. 4:16; Titus 3:9-10; 2 Tim. 2:23-25)

*(NIV) **Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers (1 Tim. 4:16)***

(NIV) But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless.¹⁰ Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him (Titus 3:9-10)

But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife.²⁴ And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient,²⁵ in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth (2 Tim. 2:23-25.)

3. **Watch for Jesus' return.** (Matt. 24:4, 32-33, 42; 25:13). Jesus will come "like a thief" if they will not respond. He will come to us at an unexpected time and in a way that we will suffer the loss that we could have avoided if we would have been watching. The lack of watching is what allows a thief to bring loss to one's life. The church was like the city. Twice before, the church had fallen because the watchmen were not on the walls and assailants had climbed the cliffs to let in invaders. The church is being rebuked for the same lack of vigilance. This is not the second coming here but a historical visitation in judgment, but it can be applied to Jesus' Second Coming.

"Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near.³³ Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door...⁴² "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. (Matt. 24:32-33, 42)

- D. One of the most significant measures of our spiritual health is if we are watching for Jesus to return. Most of the New Testament is written with that framework. Much of the New Testament is based on the reasoning: Do this and live like this *because* Jesus is coming back. There will be two groups of people when Jesus returns. Those who have been watching and praying, and those who are surprised by it, as if a thief had come during the night.

*But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.² For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.³ For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.⁴ **BUT YOU, BRETHREN, ARE NOT IN DARKNESS, SO THAT THIS DAY SHOULD OVERTAKE YOU AS A THIEF.**⁵ You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.⁶ Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober (1 Thes. 5:1-6)*

VI. PROMISE FOR OVERCOMERS: CLOTHED IN WHITE GARMENTS

You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.⁵ He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.⁶ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. (Rev. 3:4-6)

- A. They shall walk with Me in white and shall be clothed in white garments – white garments are not the same as the free gift of the robe of righteousness. Justification is a gift by faith based on Jesus’ worthiness, not ours (Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 3:4-7). These garments are expression of each believer’s dedication and they differ with each believer according to their life in this age. There are eight references in the Book of Revelation concerning our garments in the age-to-come (Rev. 3:4-5, 18; 16:15; 19:7-8; also see 1 Jn. 2:28; 2 Jn. 7-8). (cf. 1 Cor. 15:40-42; Matt 17:2; Psa. 104:2)

⁸ ***And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. (Rev. 19:8)***

- B. The priestly garments in OT give us insight into the value that God has on garments and how they speak of spiritual things. God designed them to be beautiful and to show forth His glory. (Exod 28:1-43).

VII. PROMISE FOR OVERCOMERS: JESUS WILL NOT BLOT OUT OUR NAME BUT WILL CONFESS IT BEFORE GOD

He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. (Rev. 3:5)

- A. I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life –Jesus is promising to not blot out the “record of the remembrance” of the righteous deeds if they would repent from their spiritual deadness and walk in the commitment they had in the past.

- B. The books in heaven contain vast information about our lives including our words and deeds.

Those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who meditate on His name. (Mal. 3:16)

- C. Even eternal reward can be lost. God remembers the good that we continue in until the end. He forgets the good that we turn away from.

I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. (Rev. 3:11)

If anyone's work...endures, he will receive a reward.¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Cor. 3:14-15)

Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully (2 Jn. 8; NIV)

- D. I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels – this is not a reference to being saved but to the reward of a public recognition for special nobility and faithfulness. Jesus will tell the story of our love and dedication to the Father many times throughout eternity. They were alive in name only, but if they overcame, Jesus would confess their name publicly.

His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' (Mt. 25:21)